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Deal with China is leaving questions, concerns in Oxford

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Oxford MP Arpan Khanna has some concerns with Canada's recent deal with China.

The main highlights of the deal open the market for Canadian canola, which is mostly grown in Saskatchewan, and allow nearly 50,000 Chinese electric vehicles into Canada without tariffs.

While Khanna said this may be good for Saskatchewan farmers, his concern is the impact on Oxford County automotive manufacturing.

"When I talk to our folks in Oxford, they are asking me a simple question - A little while ago, he (Prime Minister Carney) said China was the biggest threat they faced. Less than a year later, he is calling China our new strategic partner and talking about a new world order. People want to know what that means," Khanna said.

The Oxford MP understands that President Trump is not easy to deal with, but emphasized that he is one president and that we need to look at the situation strategically.

"You can't walk away from your best trading partner just because you don't get along with them," he said, pointing to the \$2 billion worth of goods that leave Tillsonburg every year bound for the U.S.

"If we're going to walk away from that, there's going to be a challenge on the ground," he said.

Outside the possibility of 49,000 Chinese EVs, which Khanna said is nearly one-third of total Canadian sales in a year, he questioned whether the vehicles pose a security risk and whether they will have cameras collecting information. Khanna said this, keeping in mind Chinese human rights violations, Canadian citizens being kidnapped, religious minorities being suppressed, and interference in the Canadian election.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



THUNDER FINISH REGULAR SEASON

(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

The Tillsonburg Thunder finished their regular season with a road game in Delhi on Saturday night. Thunder's Luke Sinclair, left, had two assists Saturday in Delhi. Playoffs start for the Thunder the weekend of Feb. 12. See Page 13 in today's paper for the story.

North end subdivision to contain commercial space, apartments

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Amendments are being proposed for a plan of subdivision slotted for the north end of town.

A notice of receipt of a complete application was filed by Oxford County Development Planner Amy Hartley

on Dec. 23. The application from developer Jacob Hiebert is for a draft plan of subdivision at 690 Broadway, which is on the east side of the road, north of Sobey's.

The draft plan of subdivision application is to allow three blocks of commercial buildings, containing 14 commercial units and six blocks for residential.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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MP concerned about impact of China deal on Oxford auto manufacturing

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

“Instead of investing in our local supply chain, we are allowing these potential security camera vehicles to drive our streets collecting information,” he said.

Khanna pointed out that Carney promised a deal with the United States before the election. With the only major deal coming out of Carney’s travels being the one with China, Khanna said it is pitting one industry against another.

“I stand with our auto makers here in Oxford County and across Canada, and will raise those concerns,” he said.

Khanna said Carney painted himself as a man with a plan and solutions, yet there is nothing major after a year.

“There are Canadian lives and manufacturers at risk,” he said. “There’s \$2 billion of goods going to the U.S. from Tillsonburg. If we don’t get a good deal, we’re going to have problems in our country.”

The soybean situation

With all the talk of lifting tariffs on canola, the question arises: what about Ontario soybeans, which also go to China? While soybeans aren’t tariffed at the same rate as canola, the full story is more complicated.

Brian Innes, executive director of Soy Canada, explained Canadian soybeans have the same three per cent tariff as most other countries in the world. The United States paid tariffs at a higher rate, but a deal was recently struck between the two countries on soybeans.

“From a farmer’s perspective, there’s been a lot of geopolitical uncertainty injected into the market,” he said.

On the positive, Innes said there was a strong export of soybeans from the 2025 crop to China. He said there is still strong import demand for soybeans for animal feed and human consumption, and that he expected this to continue.

About 60 per cent of the world’s supply of soybeans is sent to China. In Ontario,



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Oxford MP Arpan Khanna.

70 per cent of what is grown is exported, but Canada’s soybean production is only three per cent of the global crop. Ontario is the largest soybean producer in the country, accounting for about 60 per cent.

Brazil and the United States are the world’s largest producers of soybeans. Prior to Trump striking a deal in December, the U.S. could not ship soybeans to China, which meant American beans were sent to other markets. These markets overlap with Canadian export markets.

“That made it difficult for us to compete in other markets, such as Indonesia,” he said.

Innes recently returned from the annual trip to China, Japan, and Taiwan. While he said it was successful, and demand is strong, he said both the U.S. and Brazil, which had good crops, will have an impact.

Development on north Broadway to contain six apartment buildings

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

The residential blocks would house apartment buildings ranging from four storeys to six storeys, for a total of 432 units.

The application is also for an official plan amendment from service commercial to high density residential, site-specific high density residential and open space. The site-specific density residential is to allow constructing a building with 136 units per hectare, which is more than the 111 per hectare

allowed in the official plan. The application also is for a portion of land for open space.

With the application being complete, it is now being circulated to staff for comments. A public meeting will then be scheduled, expected sometime this year. A report will then come to Tillsonburg council with staff and agency comments. When the public meeting is scheduled, adjacent property owners will be identified.



(CONTRIBUTED IMAGE)

This drawing shows the plans for the property currently known as 690 Broadway, which is at the north end of town.

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EDITORIAL

A lot of pressure for prognostication

A few days after the publication of this edition, a couple of groundhogs in eastern North America are going to be dragged out of their faux dens in a ceremony that is supposed to predict what the remainder of the winter will be like.

This year the pressure is on them as Southwestern Ontario residents, and likely most eastern North American residents, have had enough of winter.

Note the groundhogs will be taken from their faux dens as no hibernating mammal would venture out of its den in the Tillsonburg area, more or less in the snow belt near Wiarnton. This means we are relying entirely on the groundhogs kept for this express purpose.

But where did this tradition come from?

In Germany, Candlemas was celebrated on Feb. 2, and the lore was if a badger emerging from its den saw its shadow, four more weeks of winter were in store. The original prognosticating mammal in Germany was a bear, but as bear numbers dwindled, the badger was substituted.

Sound familiar?

Pennsylvania Dutch settlers brought this tradition to North America. With badgers in short supply, the responsibilities fell on the groundhog, which was present in higher numbers in the days before coyotes decimated their population. However, with the weather in central Pennsylvania not a lot different than the Canadian shore of Lake Erie, the forecast period switched from four weeks to six.

The first mention of Punxsutawney Phil, America's most famous groundhog, dates back to 1886. Today, the festival surrounding Groundhog Day draws thousands of people to the small town.

The tale surrounding Wiarnton Willie is not rooted in traditions brought from Europe, but in the local hotel bar. It all started in 1956 when Mac McKenzie invited some friends out for a Groundhog Day party and one of the invitations somehow fell into the hands of a Toronto Star reporter. When the reporter arrived in Wiarnton, he was invited to join the party, but lamented the next day he needed something to take back for his trip. McKenzie put on his wife's fur hat, crawled in a snow bank, and made his prognostication.

The next year more people showed up for the Groundhog Day party, and 'costumed' humans made the prediction. As the festival grew, Willie arrived on the scene in the 1980s. Living peacefully in his den, Willie, and his successors, have had their long winter's nap interrupted every year on Feb. 2 since.

This year with the worse winter in recent history, many eyes will be watching Willie, hoping for the end of winter.

If Willie sees his shadow or not, people need to embrace the original spirit that saw the launch of Wiarnton's Groundhog Day festivities and beat the doldrums of winter. Tillsonburg no longer has a hotel bar, but fun doesn't have to involve alcohol. In between what seems like the dai-



(JOSEPH SPEHAR PHOTO)

PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED

Do you have a great photo you think would look good on the editorial page?

The Tillsonburg Post is looking for images to display in this space from community members who would like to share their art work. All images must be taken in Tillsonburg, or the immediate area, and should not be of people.

Images should be high resolution jpegs. Please send only one image per e-mail, and send no more than three images. Images should be sent to jeff@granthaven.com

ly exercise of shoveling show, traditional winter activities like cross-country skiing,

building snow sculptures, or sledding are old-fashioned fun.

A country girl comes to town and becomes a business owner



EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL

ROBIN KRAFFT

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

Longtime residents of Tillsonburg know Chris Rosehart, town councillor and owner of Chrissy's Corner Store, as a pillar of the community. Customers come and go, popping in for a fresh sandwich or a dozen eggs, and she greets everyone by name. She knows their families, their circumstances, and their stories. Some have been coming to her store since they were children.

"People are amazing," Rosehart said. "They work hard, trying to make a living, they raise their kids, people are great. Little country girl like me comes to town, and the people, the community have done

so much for me, they put me where I am."

Taking on a business and running a store was a big challenge for Chris, and she rose to meet it. She has been behind the counter for 45 years and is still going strong. She was no stranger to hard work, growing up in a farming family, and grit and resilience were familiar character traits.

"We had a tobacco farm, but we had cows, pigs, rabbits, and chickens," Rosehart said. "We took care of them. There was a big garden and there was always lots of weeding to do. We're a family, we all had to work, we worked together and it was a good life."

Chris also recalls Sundays playing outside: tree swings, fishing in the creek, tobogganing, skating on the pond, and trips to the Sand Hills. She remembers the little red schoolhouse with a woodstove that contained eight classes in one room, and a long walk to get there, before there were school buses.

After she got married, she moved to town, and throughout her twenties she continued to work in tobacco, at Fernlea Flowers, Dominion Wire, and the IGA.

"I loved working there," Rosehart said.

"It was downtown, across from the Imperial. It was a small town then, and I loved my jobs. I was always very fortunate that I loved my work."

One day a familiar customer, a local real estate agent, came in and mentioned that the store on Tillson Ave had come up for sale and suggested that she and her husband buy it.

"This is the place for you," he told her.

She was surprised, and rejected the idea at first, but he was persistent. It wasn't an easy start. Not long after they took ownership, the street was closed and torn up to replace the water and sewer system. The store was virtually inaccessible for three years.

"We were lucky to make 50 cents a day," she said. "Paul George (the previous owner) came in and helped me out. He came in all the time, he was an amazing gentleman, and he took me under his wing." She added that Paul shared an adage to live by in business: "If you don't have the money to pay for it, then don't buy it."

"Here I still am," Rosehart said, "and I still operate under that rule. It was a whole new challenge, everything. There

was always a deli counter. It was a butcher shop, there was a saw, cooler and butcher block. It was a grocery store, we didn't have all the big stores yet."

Having her fingers on the pulse of the community and its residents, Chris joined town council 27 years ago. She knew people and what they needed and she wanted to be a voice for them.

"There's been a lot of growth," she said. "We need to keep our downtown vibrant. Our forefathers did a great job, and we need to keep it up. I keep up with what's going on. I pay hydro and taxes like everybody else. I hope I'm helping make decisions for the benefit of the people, but you can't please everybody."

While she admits to being a bit outspoken, it comes from a good place, and it's her gratitude for everyday people and the town she lives in that makes her such a powerful advocate.

"I've lived a great life," Rosehart said, "I can never complain. I've met the right people at the right time. I've been really lucky. We live in one of the best countries and the best towns. People need to take note and see what's going on around them; how fortunate we are."

Learning about the Doctrine of Discovery



**THE
STAGE
IS THE
WORLD**

LAUREL A. BEECHEY

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

You, my readers, know I love history. I am fascinated by how people survived and lived from caveman days right up to my parents' generation. I loved learning about the British and French explorers coming to Canada and settling here.

Letters and diaries from explorers and settlers in Upper Canada like Catherine Parr Traill's and Susanna Moody's revealed how the Indigenous peoples taught the Europeans how to not only live off the land, but how to clear land of 200 to 300-foot trees, and to plant food. They also shared what local plants could they eat, or not eat. This knowledge included which plants were medicinal and for what, and which animals could they trap and eat. If you didn't grow or find it in the dense forests, you had nothing. There were no stores!

Most of those writings also credit the fact that if they had not had the help of the local Indigenous peoples, early settlers would have died during their first winter here in Canada. The Tillson family histories mention the Indigenous helping them several times, including showing our founder George Tillson the convergence of three creeks, where George founded our town in 1825.

Four hundred years before, Portugal's explorers followed the Atlantic shores south, rounding the Cape of Good Hope, to the East Indies and lucrative spice market. Pope Nicholas V wrote Romanus Pontifex (1455), wrote a papal bull [doctrine] which granted Portugal exclusive rights to trade and to conquer lands and peoples in West Africa, authorizing subjugation and enslavement of non-Christians for the salvation of their souls. This doctrine established a precedent for Christian dominance over non-Christian lands. Portugal could control trade to the middle east.

Britain, France, Spain, Netherlands, thought there could be an

other more direct route to Asia and spices by heading west. In 1492, Spain's Christopher Columbus set sail and ran into, not Asia, but the Bahamas and the 'Americas.' Some explorers headed north and south to find a way around this monstrous land mass, while other came to find a land passage. none having any idea of the total size of the Americas.

Columbus, however, did bring home some wonderful new items like potatoes, corn, tomatoes, cacao [chocolate], tobacco, and pineapple in 1493. That same year Alexander VI, wrote a papal bull, Inter Caetera, which noted, that the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself. ...

The two doctrines became part of the Doctrine of Discovery while Europe was exploring Africa, and transferred to all exploration discoveries. I always wondered why did the European explorers and settlers arrive and just take the land like the owned it? Because they had permission!

Many have written that the Doctrine of Discovery was the basis of European claims in the Americas, as well as the foundation for the United States' western expansion into Indigenous lands.

Even four hundred years later, in 1823 the US Supreme court's Chief Justice John Marshall's opinion in the unanimous decision held "that the principle of discovery gave European nations an absolute right to New World lands." As far as they were concerned the

North American Indigenous people did not own the land, they were just using it and could be removed when a Christian 'discovered' the land and wanted it.

Explorers would take the Indigenous people home by the shipload to be enslaved. Others brought diseases, which the people had no immunity to, which decimated the Indigenous populations over the Americas.

Our Indigenous people have remained loyal to Canada, giving up their treaty rights to enlist in WW1, even though their talents greatly assisted the Allies. You rarely here of them, or that they received no benefits. In fact, in 1919 resources were taken from them - 85,000 acres of reserve land in Western Canada - so the government could keep their promise to non-Indigenous veterans while they were fighting to govern themselves.

An Indigenous veteran of WW2 noted, "When I served overseas, I was a Canadian. When I came home, I was an Indian."

In the 1990s the Supreme Court of Canada, in its final report to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), noted the Doctrine of Discovery has been cited in decisions.

Several Churches were involved with the residential schools. The United Church of Canada Anglican Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church of Canada, Roman Catholic Church & Church of England all offered formal apologies.

What else should we be doing to undo the wrongs of the past associated with the Doctrine of Discovery?



A FROSTY NIGHT OUT

(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

About 30 people turned out for Tillsonburg's annual Frosty Night Out held at the J.L. Scott McLean Outdoor Recreation Pad. The night featured free skating, hot chocolate and treats donated by Tim Hortons Broadway and a variety of games and prizes.

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Autoneum's Canadian operations to be consolidated in Tillsonburg



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Swiss company Autoneum will be consolidating its Canadian operations in Tillsonburg. The changes will include closing a plant in London.

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Autoneum's Canadian operations will be consolidated at the Tillsonburg plant as the international company grapples with changes in demand.

"The ongoing decline in automotive industry volumes, combined with changes in customer production patterns, continues to have a significant impact on Autoneum's Canadian operations," said Ulrike Reich, head of corporate communications for the Swiss-based company.

Operations at the London plant will cease by the end of 2026, which will impact 136 positions there.

"Transfer opportunities to the Tillsonburg plant will be considered and offered where possible," Reich said of the London closing.

Speaking to the Tillsonburg plant, Reich said, "The consolidated Tillsonburg facility offers the strongest foundation, with increased volumes and improved efficiency, to remain competitive in the medium and long term."

The Tillsonburg plant has approximately 150 employees and produces floor insulation, wheelhouse inner liners, heavy layer/ fiber, inner dashes, covers for electric drive modules for acoustic and thermal management in vehicles.

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Through out *Hilda's Yard*, Sam makes numerous references to pop culture that come from watching his new TV. TV was a marketing gateway for the Movies of the Time, movies that are considered icons* today.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Movie industry created a whole new medium just for TV, the Movie Trailer. TV even forced the nature of movie's to change to compete. The birth of the epic movie genre like Ben Hur was in direct reponse to the rise of the small screen. A movie ticket was around sixty cents or about \$7.15 in today's dollars. So grab your nickel bag of candy, your dime popcorn and enjoy.



GET YOUR POPCORN READY.

- If you love movies here are the Hilda's Yard recommendations of must-see iconic movies* and movie stars of the 1950's.
- For a good drama *Sunset Boulevard*, *North by Northwest* and *On the Water Front** with Marlon Brando top our list with James Deans' *Rebel Without A Cause* coming in as Beverly's Pick.
- Westerns were always popular. Gary Cooper's *High Noon*, *Shane* and Sam's favourite John Wayne's hit *The Searchers** must sees for the six shooter fan.
- This was also a Golden Age of the Hollywood Musical. Hits like *Singing in the Rain**, *Funny Face* with Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire, *A Star is Born* with Judy Garland, *Jailhouse Rock*, *South Pacific*, and Janey's pick *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* starring Marilyn Monroe all have songs that people still sing today.
- The Big screen needed a big scope so epic adventures abounded. *Seven Samurai** and

The Bridge on the River Kwai were action movies while Charleton Heston's *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben-Hur* were historical large-scale productions.

- Comedies were immensely popular. *Roman Holiday* Audrey Hepburn's breakout role, two Marilyn Monroe hits, *How to Marry a Millionaire* and *Some Like It Hot** and Hilda's Favourite, *Pillow Talk* starring Doris Day and Rock Hudson, defined the late-50s sex comedy.
- For romantic thrillers Cary Grant's *To Catch a Thief** is a must, while Gary's favourite Cary Grant film *An Affair to Remember* snuck into 90's rom coms.
- Believe it or not the biggest Movie Star in the 50's was James Stewart. Staring in thrillers earned him critical and box office acclaim. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock *Rear Window*, *Bobbi's fav*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and *Vertigo** kept James in Hollywood's spot light.

Five individuals charged with drug possession offences in tillsonburg

Members of the Oxford detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), along with members of the Oxford and Brant Community Street Crime Unit (CSCU,) arrested five individuals on drug possession charges.

On Jan. 20, at approximately 1 p.m., there was an increased police presence at a business property on Broadway, in the Town of Tillsonburg.

As a result of the investigation, all five individuals were charged with the following offences:

- Possession of a Schedule I Substance - Methamphetamine
- Possession of a Schedule I Substance - Cocaine
- Possession of a Schedule I Substance - Opioid

The accused were released from custody and are scheduled to appear before the

Ontario Court of Justice, in Woodstock, at a later date.

Due to an ongoing investigation no further details will be released at this time.

Oxford OPP would like to thank the members of the community for their commitment to community safety by contacting police when they have safety concerns.

"Oxford OPP is committed to the safety of all individuals who live, work, and visit Oxford County," said Oxford OPP Detachment Commander, Inspector Tony Hymers. "Drug use in public is not only illegal, but it can impact the safety of other members of the public. These types of arrests highlight the collaborative efforts of the Oxford OPP, Oxford and Brant CSCU and members of the community, working together to accomplish the shared goal of a safer community."

Break and enter investigation at Cultus marijuana greenhouse

Police are requesting the public's assistance in identifying the individual or individuals responsible for a break-and-enter near Cultus.

On Saturday, Jan. 24, at approximately 11:54 a.m., members of the Norfolk County Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) responded to a report of a break-and-enter on Fairground Road, just outside of Cultus.

The investigation has determined that between Saturday, Jan. 3, and Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026, one or more unidentified individuals forced entry into a greenhouse on the property and stole a

quantity of wire, along with marijuana processing equipment, including lights, humidifiers, sprayers, and de-budders.

Police are actively conducting an ongoing investigation and are appealing to the public for assistance. Anyone with relevant information is urged to contact the Norfolk County OPP at 1-888-310-1122.

Should you wish to remain anonymous, you may call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or leave an anonymous online tip at www.helpsolvecrime.com where you may be eligible to receive a cash reward of up to \$2,000.

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Two pick-up trucks stolen near LaSalette

Police are requesting the public's assistance in locating two stolen pickup trucks and identifying the individuals responsible.

On Sunday, Jan. 18, at approximately 8:55 a.m., members of the Norfolk County Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) responded to a report of a vehicle theft from a property on Brantford Road in La Salette.

The investigation determined that sometime overnight, one or more unidentified individuals entered the property and stole a black 2015 GMC Sierra pickup truck. The vehicle features a custom front grille, a fuel tank mounted in the truck bed, and Ontario licence plates 8795HA.

A photograph of the stolen vehicle is attached for reference.

Later that same day, at approximately 5:50 p.m., officers responded to a further report of a vehicle theft from a property on Windham Road 19 in La Salette.

The investigation determined that three unidentified individuals arrived at the lo-

cation in a pickup truck and stole a second vehicle—a purple 2007 Chevrolet Silverado pickup truck bearing Ontario licence plates CB52549—from the property.

Shortly thereafter, officers responded to a fail-to-remain collision on Windham Road 19. Based on evidence collected at the scene, police believe the stolen vehicle was involved. The vehicle is expected to have front-end damage and a missing front grille.

A photograph of the stolen vehicle is attached for reference.

Police are actively conducting ongoing investigations and are appealing to the public for assistance. Anyone with relevant information is urged to contact the Norfolk County OPP at 1-888-310-1122.

Should you wish to remain anonymous, you may call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or leave an anonymous online tip at www.helpsolvecrime.com where you may be eligible to receive a cash reward of up to \$2,000.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Elgin-St. Thomas and Oxford County recognized by the province as 'age-friendly communities'

The Ontario government has recognized Elgin-St. Thomas and Oxford County as age-friendly communities for their contributions to more inclusive physical and social environments for aging adults.

The recognition was announced at the recent Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference in Toronto on Jan. 18, where the honourable Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, acknowledged nearly 70 age-friendly communities across Ontario. These join a growing number of communities that have achieved this designation globally.

"We are honoured to recognize and celebrate Elgin-St. Thomas and Oxford County as age-friendly communities," said Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. "Through community-led initiatives that promote social engagement and physical activity, you are helping to protect the health and well-being of seniors and demonstrating your commitment to continuing to build a province that is inclusive for Ontarians of all ages and abilities."

Local initiatives to support an aging population are led by the Oxford Age-Friendly steering committees, which are comprised of local older adults, community organizations, and representatives from municipalities, counties, and public health.

"It's an incredible honour to be recognized by the province in this way," says Meagan Lichti, Chair for the Age-Friendly committees in Elgin-St. Thomas and Oxford County. "This work reflects our belief that every

resident deserves the opportunity to age safely and with dignity while engaged in community life. We are grateful for the commitment of our partners, who continue to champion this initiative locally to ensure aging-related priorities are woven into the fabric of our community."

According to data from Southwestern Public Health, adults aged 65 and older increased from 16.1 per cent to 20.2 per cent in the region between 2011 and 2021, with the proportion of seniors living in low income on the rise, and one in five seniors living alone. The region also reports a significantly higher rate of emergency department visits for injuries related to falls compared to the provincial average.

Local age-friendly initiatives have been ongoing for the past several years.

Oxford County established its partnership for aging populations in 2024 and completed a local needs assessment in 2025. Revised age-friendly strategies from both committees are anticipated this spring.

"This recognition really speaks to the strength of our local partnerships, including our municipalities, community organizations, Southwestern Public Health, and the dedicated Age-Friendly committees who work every day to support older adults in our communities," said Rob Flack, MPP Elgin-Middlesex-London. "As our senior population continues to grow, this kind of practical planning is more important than ever. I want to thank both committees for updating their strategies based on local needs and for taking real, tangible steps to build

safer, more inclusive, and more accessible communities."

"Community vitality is a strategic focus for Oxford's municipalities, and the principles of age-friendly communities align with our vision for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future," said Marcus Ryan, Oxford County warden. "This designation is possible through the strength of our community partnerships, a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility at the highest levels, and the ongoing work and support of Southwestern Public Health."

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Canadian Foodgrains Bank making a difference to world hunger

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Local participants in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank learned more about how their efforts were making a difference at a recent appreciation event held at Crosspoint Community Church on Jan. 17.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a humanitarian organization, based in Winnipeg. It is supported by 15 different church denominations, representing 12,000 congregations. Locally, a sign on a field north of Tillsonburg on Highway 19 signifies the project being celebrated, which is a joint effort between Crosspoint and Mt. Elgin United Church.

“Our mission is to end global hunger, said Henry Reiders, recently-retired Ontario representative for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. “Our vision is a world without hunger.”

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank model is for local groups across the country to grow crops, sell the harvest and donate the proceeds to the national organization.

“There’s actually enough food available in the world to feed everyone, it’s just the distribution isn’t equal,” Reiders said.

Canadian Food Grains Bank has helped 1.2 million people in 74 countries with over \$74 million in assistance. This is delivered through emergency food delivery in times of crisis and long-term response to help people improve their household food security. The federal government will match money raised through the program, but it maxes out at \$25 million per year, which is reached annually.

There are 80 to 90 growing projects in Ontario, varying from one acre to 300 acres, with an average of 15 to 20 acres.

Reiders said people are dying because they don’t have access to food, and resources outside of food, such as vaccinations and maternity classes.

“Aid is something that helps everyone, including us in Canada,” he said, explaining vaccinations can reduce the risk of disease and conflicts spreading globally.

Canadian Foodgrains Banks statistics state every \$1 that goes out for aid brings back \$1.19.

Today, there are 318 million people who

are considered food insecure, which is double the number from 2019. This has already cost 600,000 lives, a number that could jump to 14 million by 2030. Many of those at risk of death are children.

The local initiative is on 16 acres of land, north of Ostrander. It sees volunteers working the land, planting and harvesting. Support is also received through donated supplies and equipment from local agriculture dealerships.

On the ground

Arnold Ypma, one of the local participants, provided insight into a trip he took to Uganda last year to see the work of Canadian Foodgrains Bank on the ground. World Renew, another organization that works to address hunger, was also an organizer of the trip.

Ypma said the situation in Uganda is made worse by people fleeing from Sudan.

“They’re simply going from one area of poverty to another area of poverty, hoping to avoid conflict and trying to find a life there,” he said.

The trip involved stops at two different areas of Uganda. One common theme in both was hearing what life was like before and after Canadian Foodgrains Bank and World Renew assisted.

Traditionally, the area visited depended on cattle for survival, and as a form of currency. Many of the cattle area gone due to theft and worsening situations. The situation was dire enough that half the infants born died of starvation. Emergency food aid was the first step, but then people were trained to grow crops.

Ypma said it was found the soil was rich enough and there was enough rain during the wet season to grow crops. Locals were taught to save money from their food sales in the wet season to be able to purchase food in the dry season. Now, 90 per cent have food security.

“That’s life changing,” he said.

For instance, the former practice was to scatter corn seed to plant it. Now, the Ugandans have been taught to plant in rows to increase yield.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Local volunteers with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank received a presentation informing them more about the difference their efforts are making in countries around the world.



(ARNOLD YPMA PHOTO)

This photo shows one of the kitchen gardens locals in Uganda are being encouraged to grow to assist with their food security. The building in the middle of the photo is one of the homes.

Another change is the thank-you presentation put on by the locals was done by people from three different villages. The villages were seven to eight miles apart and travelling from one to another is by walking. Whereas before residents of the villages were fighting and stealing cattle from each other, now all are working together.

In another village, a young married couple

were only eating one meal a day, and skipping meals some days, just over a decade ago. Now, with education from Canadian Food Grain Bank and World renew, they have food security and area assisting people in nine other nearby villages.

The goal is that after five to seven years of assistance a community will become self-sustaining.

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SWOX NEWS



South-West Oxford council briefs

Budget approved with \$13 million to municipal office

South West Oxford Township (SWOX) council approved its 2026 budget with an estimated amount of \$13 million included for the proposed new municipal office, child care facility and library in Mount Elgin, with a corresponding debenture, or unsecured loan, for the same amount. A financing plan/proposal will be developed in the coming months.

Council also voted to proceed to the second phase of the procurement process with a shortlisted group of qualified firms to act as construction manager on behalf of the township.

A request for pre-qualification (RFP) for construction management services was issued in 2025 and closed with 28 submissions. Staff evaluated proposals based on scoring criteria outlined in the RFP.

Particular emphasis was placed on firms that demonstrated successful delivery of municipal facilities, community centres, child care facilities, libraries and other multi-use public buildings.

Based on the evaluation results, council voted to proceed with the following short-listed firms: AEC Developments; Aquicon Construction; Ball Construction; D. Grant Construction Limited; Melloul-Blaney Construction Inc.; Reid & DeLeye Contractors Ltd.; and Sierra General Contracting.

Staff will request financial proposals from these shortlisted firms in two phases: pre-construction/design development services and construction delivery services. Staff are hoping to return to council with these results and a recommended construction management company at their March 3, 2026 meeting.

Council approves purchase of new waste management truck

Council approved the purchase of a new waste management truck at its Jan. 20 meeting, as well as the sale of its 2014 waste management truck. One new 2026 Fanotech waste management body on a Freightliner chassis will be purchased at a cost of \$421,292 plus applicable taxes. Staff anticipate delivery in approximately eight months.

An allocation of \$250,000 was made to reserves in the 2026 budget to assist with the purchase.

The balance of the cost will be transferred from the township's Waste Management Reserve.

2026 Municipal Election – Candidate Information Sessions

SWOX council is holding two candidate information sessions to assist with the 2026 municipal election. These sessions will cover key topics such as eligibility requirements, the nomination process, important dates and deadlines, as well as the roles and responsibilities of elected officials.

Mayor David Mayberry has indicated he will not be seeking re-election. These sessions will provide staff and the mayor with an opportunity to engage with members of the public who are interested in running for office and to offer insight into what is involved with serving as an elected official at the municipal level.

These information sessions will be held on Wednesday, March 4 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Brownsville Fire Station and on Monday, March 9 at the Beachville Fire Station.

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Boyd family, Strand audience enjoy premiere

CHRIS ABBOTT

Post Correspondent

It was an emotional night for the Langton-area Boyd family.

Excited, and maybe in some cases a bit nervous, Greg and Victoria and their three children watched the Jan. 12 premiere of *Young Farmer* for the first time on the 'big screen' at The Strand in Simcoe.

The locally filmed and produced documentary by Daryl Granger, Victoria's brother, features the farming journey of Roman, Connor and Lauren in 2025, assisted by parents Greg and Victoria.

"My eyes were watering as soon as it started, as soon as Greg started talking about the history, the family, and where it all came from, and seeing those old pictures of his ancestry, his grandfather," said Victoria.

AI was used to bring old family portraits to life for the introduction.

"An example of technology being used the right way," said Greg, former chair of the Tillsonburg Farmers Market committee.

Victoria played a supporting role in the documentary, which has already won, placed, or advanced in 14 international film festivals.

"I'm behind the scenes and I support, and I make sure everybody's fed and clothed and healthy and well and where they need to be."

And she made sure seven-year-old Roman Boyd's single pair of overalls, which he wore pretty much every scene, were washed.

"Just the one pair, so had to make sure they were washed," she laughed, "a lot... because he was rolling around. That's what he does, he likes to roll around in the dirt."

In the documentary, Victoria said, "Where do you find Roman? He's out on the farm. That's where you're going to find him."

"Not going to lie, it was a lot of work," Greg smiled. "Not only growing the garden, but working with Roman to teach him and get him to be friendly in front of the camera."

"Tonight, very proud, very proud. Proud of all of them, they did a great job. And I'm just continually impressed by Daryl's talent and what he is capable of doing, and I'm looking forward to be seeing what he will be doing in the future."

Greg, who operated Heritage Lane Produce for 14 years, had the knowledge and expertise to create and 'build' the garden. Their children had varying levels of experience assisting in the



(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

Young Farmer's Roman Boyd signed autographs for the Jan. 12 opening of the locally filmed and produced full-length documentary by Daryl Granger, on the left.

garden.

"Connor... vegetables weren't his thing. Cows, cows and more cows for him."

The family's beef cows, and the dairy farm where Connor works, were also featured in the documentary.

Lauren grew sunflowers to compete in the Langton Fair (where she won two first-place ribbons, and defended her 'tallest' sunflower championship) and sell at the Simcoe Farmers Market, along with Roman's vegetables.

"Roman, he was always interested in watermelons – he loves watermelons. That was always his thing. 2025 was kind of his first real introduction to 'This is how we start' and 'This is how we prepare' and 'This is how we grow it' and sell it. It was his

first go-around, really, and I think it's been a positive experience for him, for sure."

The documentary was not the Boyd family's idea, Greg noted.

"It was Daryl's idea, Daryl approached us. Originally it was just going to be like a 15-minute YouTube thing. That's what we all thought we were getting into."

"Then, about halfway through the season he breaks the news, 'No, this is going to be a full-length documentary.' So my anxiety kind of went up a little bit at that point," Greg laughed.

Pleased with the finished product, Greg said "We couldn't be more happy."

Young Farmer will continue playing at The Strand – on scheduled dates – until the end of March.

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Tillsonburg air cadet earns pilot's license through scholarship

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

A member of the 153 Varnavair Royal Canadian Air Cadets is now a licensed pilot.

Warrant Officer Second Class Addison Mabee of Delhi, a five-year member of the air cadets, earned her glider pilot license last year. This year, she was successful in completing her full pilot's license through a program with the Royal

Canadian Air Cadets at no cost.

She was one of only 24 cadets nationwide to take part in the program. Mabee had to write a qualifying exam and then go through an interview process.

"It was a lot of questions about your personality and leadership style as well as what you've done in your squadron," said the 17-year-old.

Although not the first to earn a pilot's license from Tillsonburg cadets, Mabee is the only one to complete the feat recently.

"It was a challenging experience because I was the only person in our squadron who had done power or glider, so there was no way to know what to expect," she said.

Mabee was at CFB Galetown in New Brunswick from June 30 to August 15 at the Cadet Training Centre Argonaut. Each day consisted of flying and ground school, six days per week.

"We had to be ready to go to breakfast by 6 a.m. and lights out by 10 p.m.," she said, adding flying started at 8 a.m.

Although the training was conducted at a military base, it was delivered by the Moncton Flight School, a civilian company. Mabee flew a Diamond DA-20, which is manufactured in London. This two-seat aircraft has dual controls so the instructor can override the student at any time.

The first step in the training was the basics of flight, travelling straight and level. Then she graduated to completing turns. By the second flight, students were taking off and landing.

"They demonstrate everything first, and then you take over," she said. "There wasn't much they had to do after that."



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Warrant Officer Second Class Addison Mabee proudly displays her wings, signifying she has her pilot's license. The local cadet earned her pilot's license at no charge this summer.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Addison Mabee stands next to the Diamond Eclipse trainer that she earned her pilot's license in through the Royal Canadian Air Cadets program.

Mabee admitted it was a little scary, learning to fly at 17 and being away.

"Having the glider training the previous summer, it made it a lot more calm for me," she said.

To earn a pilot's license, 45 hours of flying are needed. The course allotted that much time. She has been trying to gain more hours since returning home, but the weather last fall and this winter hasn't helped.

Mabee's next goal is to get her night rating so she can fly at night, followed by her commercial pilot's license. The latter requires 200 hours of flight time. In the long term, Mabee would like to study mechanical or aerospace engineering and is awaiting a response.

"I applied to a military college," she said. "That was my top choice. That would mean I have to spend the summer in basic training."

Being accepted to military college means there is no cost for her schooling, but there is a service commitment with the Canadian Armed Forces in return.

Beyond college, Mabee would like to fly fighter jets, or be a civilian flight instructor. If she achieves the former goal,

she will be joining an elite few, as only seven Canadian women have been fighter pilots.

Cadets needed

Tillsonburg 153 Varnavair Air Cadets are recruiting new cadets aged 12 to 18. Training is weekly from 7 p.m. to 9:15 on Thursdays from September to June. There is no cost for the program.

The program offers opportunities for survival training, band membership, sports programs, glider flights, pilot training, and earning a pilot's license. For more information, scan the attached QR code.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

KNIGHTS HELP

The St. Mary's Knights of Columbus recently made a \$5,000 donation to the Salvation Army Christmas Campaign. Left to right are: Ted Novakowski, the Faithful Navigator to the 4th Degree and treasurer; Major Denise Walker from The Salvation Army; and William Cannon, the Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus Council 3212 in Tillsonburg.

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Courtland's Tosha Hains featured on Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame panel discussion

JEFF TRIBE

Post Correspondent

Judging by her resume, Tosha Hains' participation on the 2026 Canadian Women In Baseball Panel Discussion may not be her only association with the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame (CBHF).

But it's a good starting point.

"Just being considered to do this panel is quite humbling," said the Courtland native, describing herself as both pleased and surprised. "But very honoured."

The virtual panel is scheduled on National Girls & Women in Sport Day Wednesday, February 4 at 7 p.m., hosted by the CBHF in conjunction with Rawlings Canada. It features four women with significant impact in the sport on the field, behind the scenes and in MLB front offices discussing their work how they got there. The event will be streamed via Zoom and is free of charge although donations are welcome. Interested persons need to pre-register via baseballhalloffame.ca, pulling down the 'What's On' option near the top, middle of the website, and from there, clicking on Canadian Women In Baseball under the 'News' heading.

Invited for her pioneering and ongoing work as a woman umpire, Hains will be joined by Baseball Canada Women's National Team centre fielder Sena Catterall, consultant, on-air analyst and former Director of Major League Ops. for the New York Mets Liz Benn, and Andrea Goldstein, Vice-President of Communications for the Toronto Blue Jays.

The then Tosha Winters began playing fast-ball in Tillsonburg, enjoying the sport but not the travel required as she moved into older age divisions. Wanting to stay in the game she loved, Hains began umpiring as a teenager in 1988. Traditionally, female umpires began and stayed in fastball, men doing baseball. However, Hains received zero push-back when she broke an invisible barrier by umpiring the latter, in fact was welcomed to do so.

"It was 'Oh great, another umpire,'" recalled Hains, who several years later, would also be the first woman baseball umpire in London. "I was blessed to be in Tillsonburg that way."

Setting her sights high, Hains attended the Brinkman/Froemming Professional Umpire school in Cocoa Beach, Florida first in 1992, and again in 1994 as the lone woman on both occasions. One of three professional umpiring schools at the time, its five-week course was the first qualifier for a selection process for a second six-week program, and thence onward for potential job offers at the minor league level, the first step toward the ultimate goal of a major league umpiring career.

"It was boot camp," said Hains, who quickly realized how much she still had to learn about baseball.

The experience, while tough, was also productive despite the fact she did not advance. Hains did however form friendships and facilitate positive networking that would lead to other opportunities, while also advancing her own understanding of her craft.

"That gave me the confidence and skills to



(KIM OPHEIM PHOTO)

Tosha Hains marks the count during the 2025 Women's Summer Games.

become a better umpire and move into the national program."

She joined the Baseball Canada national program in 1988, the starting point for a full count's worth of lifetime achievements. Hains umpired her first national championship in 1999, going on to umpire/supervise 10 such events. She was the first woman to umpire in Ontario's Inter-County Baseball League, the first in the Frontier League (1999) and in 2005, became the first woman to umpire in the Canada Cup, first to do so twice with a 2024 return. Hains officiated at the 2001 International Women's World Series in Toronto, working with USA catcher Jen Pawol during the gold medal game. Pawol went on to be the first woman umpire at the MLB level. In 2022, Hains umpired during the Women's Team Canada versus Team USA Friendship Series and also had home plate for the historic first game at the 2025 Women's Summer Games in Newfoundland.

"It was just incredible," said Hains. "The whole game was electric on the field and in the stands."

She is also a Baseball Canada Master Course Conductor and Umpire Supervisor.

In short, Hains has been a pioneering woman in a male-dominated space, breaking through glass ceilings and creating a roadmap for others to follow.

"It hasn't been easy, but it has been worth it."

As an illustrative point, Hains referred to the national level certification course she attended for years with fellow umpire Lisa Turbitt.

"We always knew who we'd be rooming with because there was only the two of us."

That was the case for years said Hains, but more recently, they were two of nine women at the event. Modest change perhaps, slow in coming, but undeniably, change Hains has been a role model for, humbled when other women umpires tell her there are there, 'because of her.'

"Being that mentor, being that person someone turns to is satisfying."

Hains is inspired by the enthusiasm of young women umpires, encouraged to see them taking advantage of the opportunities she and others like Turbitt created.

"We're passing that torch and these girls who are picking it up and taking it forward are going to be able to do so much more than we did. We got to shine a little bit, but they're going to shine even more."

Hains and husband Blair, also a national level umpire, reside in Milton and have one son. She is grateful for the many opportunities umpiring has afforded her - admittedly would accept one more international assignment as a career 'pinnacle' - and sustained by her love for the game.

"I loved playing but I think I love umpiring more," Hains concluded. "It's just a different side of the game."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Courtland native Tosha Hains (centre) had home plate for the inaugural 2025 Women's Summer Games in Newfoundland, pictured with crewmates Skylar Blanchette and Margaret Jean Willis.

Fody's jumps ahead in Club Oxford A Division playoff race

JEFF GWYN

Post Contributor

A win over ReMax, plus a tie, saw Fody's jump into first place in Club Oxford's A Division, while the race for third place tightened up in B Division with the playoffs approaching.

January 18

A Division

Apple Shack 1, ReMax 1

Apple Shack had some good breakouts and worked hard for their shorthanded goal. They couldn't get too many rebounds and that limited their chances. ReMax couldn't get their offence going in this one, they did have some chances and a late goal was waived off. A tough way to earn a point.

Brandon Velda had a goal for Apple Shack. Ben Sharp had the goal for ReMax.

Health Hut 5, Fody's 5

Health Hut was able to get some pressure down low and some good chances in front. They were able to stick with the high-powered Fody's team throughout. Fody's started a bit slow, but they play to the end. They forced some pressure late and it helped them get a couple late goals to earn the tie.

Dave VanWyk had four points for Health Hut. Brandon Sawatzky had two goals for Fody's.

B Division

Glass 2, Prouse Mortgages 1

Glass played a great shutdown game. They kept Prouse Mortgages to the outside all night. Glass was able to get pressure in close and made it count when they did. Prouse Mortgages had trouble getting by the Glass defence, especially down low. They couldn't get their normal offence going and may have frustrated themselves as the game went

on.

Brad Schopp had a goal for Glass. Stephan Coulombe had a goal for Prouse Mortgages.

Source 4, RND 2

Source was able to get some great chances. They had pressure throughout the game and didn't let RND get anything going. A solid game. RND did well to kill off an early two-man disadvantage, but couldn't gain any momentum off of it. They had some chances, but couldn't keep things on net in this one.

Nate Bisschop had two goals for Source. Justin Rowles had two points for RND.

Airmount 4, Carquest 2

Airmount was buzzing early with some good rushes and forechecking in the offensive zone. They did well to keep Carquest at bay and did not let them get their passes through. Carquest were frustrated with Airmount's defence tonight. They couldn't get passes through or quality shots on net. A tough loss in the tight playoff race.

JJ Harden had a hat trick for Airmount. Brad Henderson had a goal for Carquest.

Royal LePage 5, B-Line 3

Royal LePage played a fairly even game. They traded leads in the first, but really pressured late and it paid off in the final minute. B-Line changed up some lines and it gave them a jump in this one. In the second, they had trouble getting chances and just couldn't hold on for the tie.

Chris Wilson had two goals for Royal LePage. Kris Bradfield had two points for B-Line.

January 21

A Division

Fody's 5, ReMax 4

After a tightly checked first, Fody's was able

to find their scoring in the second. Their spares came through on the scoresheet, which kept ReMax on their heels all night. ReMax was in this battle for first. They had some chances, but had to be careful with Fody's offense. A late push just came up short in this one.

Chris Fody had two points for Fody's. Cory Campbell-Smith had two points for ReMax.

Health Hut 6, Apple Shack 3

Health Hut had a strong game tonight. They had a bunch of rush chances and outlet passes. Their speed kept the pressure on all night. Apple Shack had to work hard in the defensive zone, which hindered the offense tonight. They had some chances, but couldn't get much pressure in

this one.

Ryan Dayman had three assists for Health Hut. Brandon Lawler had three assists for Apple Shack.

Prouse Mortgages 3, RND 2

Prouse Mortgages were set back by the quick RND start, but rebounded quickly. They took advantage of their powerplays and then kept RND from getting much going later in the game. RND started off great and fought hard all game. They kept the high offensive Prouse Mortgages off the board in the second, but early penalty trouble took them out of this one in the end.

Dan King had two points for Prouse Mortgages. Gaige Benish had a goal for RND.

CLUB OXFORD A DIVISION	GP	W	L	T	PTS
FODY'S AUTOMOTIVE	22	14	7	1	29
REMAX REALTY	22	12	6	4	28
THE HEALTH HUT	22	6	11	5	17
THE APPLE SHACK	22	6	14	2	14

CLUB OXFORD B DIVISION	GP	W	L	T	PTS
SOURCE FOR SPORTS	22	18	3	1	37
JEFF PROUSE MORTGAGES	22	10	5	7	27
TILLSONBURG GLASS	22	8	6	8	24
ROYAL LEPAGE REALTY	22	9	8	5	23
CARQUEST AUTO PARTS	22	8	8	6	22
B-LINE TRUCKING	22	6	12	4	16
AIRMOUNT FARMS	22	6	14	2	14
RND CONSTRUCTION	22	4	13	5	13

Thunder cruise into playoffs with 7-3 win

CHRIS ABBOTT

Post Correspondent

The Tillsonburg Thunder and Delhi Flames came out blazing Saturday night at the Delhi Community Arena with the home team outshooting the visitors 16-14 in the opening frame.

But it was the Thunder who took a 2-1 lead on goals by Sebastian Guastadisegni and Hunter Monkhouse. Tillsonburg added three more in the second period, and two in the third to clinch a 7-3 Ontario Elite Hockey League victory.

Monkhouse, a 'net-front presence guy,' led the Thunder with a five-point night, scoring twice and adding three assists to earn Tillsonburg's Player of the Game.

"I love getting the dirty goals," Monkhouse smiled.

Monkhouse also has a five-point night one week earlier when the Thunder blanked Delhi 8-0 at the Kinsmen Memorial Arena in Tillsonburg.

"Definitely a rivalry," said Monkhouse, who played for the Flames last season. "Being so close together, it's been a heated rivalry. It's always an intense game against Delhi. They come to play physically and it was a great game from all of our team.

"Great way to finish (the regular sea-

son), gives us some momentum going into the playoffs, for sure."

With five wins since early December, Tillsonburg has been gaining ground in the nine-team OEHF South Division. Currently sixth, the 9-12-1 Thunder are waiting to learn their first-round playoff opponent. Monkhouse said Petrolia was a possibility.

"Earlier, there were some times when we had a couple close losses, but we started working together more as a team, getting to know each other a bit better, and it all kind of came together at the end of the season. I think we're going to have a really deep playoff run – I think we can go against any of the top teams in the league.

"I think we play a very physical game and we just play really well in front of the crowd in Tillsonburg. They are a big part of our wins too. We're just getting excited for playoffs. We knew we had to work on our systems in practice and that kind of got everyone going during the game. It's just going out there and perfecting what we were doing well at the beginning of the season and getting the chemistry. New rushes, zone play and it's been paying off for the last five games."

Thunder coach Rick Voltera agreed it's important for the team to stick to their system and play 'The Thunder Game' in

the post season.

"We like to crash and bang and play physical, and we like to get to those key areas," said Voltera. "We're pretty set in our ways right now."

The Thunder await the completion of the regular season by the other teams. The Thunder were lucky that we had no weather related cancellations. Other teams were not so lucky. There are no Thunder games the next 2 weekends. Playoffs start the weekend of February 12. The Thunder could play Petrolia, Tavistock, Erin or Elora. Watch the paper and the signs around town for details.

Tillsonburg defenceman Harlen VanWynsberghe, now playing his second season with the Thunder, is carrying on a family legacy.

"Finner (Mike Findlay) played with my dad (Derek) when my dad played with the Vipers and Thunder. It's crazy."

VanWynsberghe, 28, currently living in the Hamilton area, finished his Junior B career in 2018-19, then played three years of senior hockey in Seaforth. He took a year off before returning to his hometown.

"I always kind of wanted to play for the Thunder, obviously growing up in town and not missing many Thunder games as a little kid... It's kind of cool to play

in the Tillsonburg arena, which is something I didn't really get to do at all after like age 10.

"It's cool – I really enjoy being on the actual ice in Tillsonburg, with the big roof. I really like it. My grandfather comes to every single home game, which is another reason why I came home. He'd watch the games anyways, because he's a hockey nut, but it's nice to let him watch the games too."

It wasn't easy getting back into competitive hockey, he admitted, after taking off the 2023-24 season.

"It was tough. Coming out of junior, it was easy, it was just a bit of an adjustment obviously after one summer off. But after taking the year... there was definitely a bit of a learning curve... that it's not pick-up hockey and it is competitive again. You do have to do a full 60 minutes."

But the competitive drive never really goes away.

"That's the reason you play senior hockey at this level, you're a competitive person that can't really turn it off, so you need to productive way of competing and trying to beat people," he laughed. "That's kind of my mindset."

"It's been good," VanWynsberghe concluded. "It keeps me in shape, keeps me honest."

MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK

(STUART BLOWER PHOTOS)



U13 Oxford Storm vs Brant Battalion. No.10 and No. 18 take charge of the puck while 11 comes up from behind.



Tillsonburg Minor Hockey U7 Tornados vs Express.



U11, South Oxford Storm Vs Brant Battalion. No. 16 and No. 8 lead the charge.



Tillsonburg Minor Hockey U7 Tornados vs Express.



U11B Tillsonburg Twisters vs Waterloo Wildfire. Goalie Lyla Ashbury and Morgan Lenane block the ring.



Tillsonburg Minor Hockey U7 Tornados vs Express.



U11 Tillsonburg Tornados vs Burford Coyotes. Emmerich Janzen (Tillsonburg) races for the puck.

Ypma, Van Parys qualify for Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in Medicine Hat

CHRIS ABBOTT

Post Correspondent

Two local athletes have qualified for the 2026 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

'We Shine Together' is the slogan for the August 10-15 event, which will feature 1,700 participants and competition in 10 sports, including bocce and golf.

William Ypma, from Special Olympics Ontario – Tillsonburg, will compete in golf. Jamie Van Parys, also from Special Olympics Ontario – Tillsonburg, will compete in bocce. Both qualified through the Special Olympics Ontario Summer Games, winning silver medals last July in Brantford, and will be members of Team Ontario.

Bocce will be played indoors on artificial turf in Medicine Hat, a first for the Special Olympics Summer Games.

"It was very hot (in Brantford)," said 26-year-old Van Parys, recalling mid-July heat warnings.

A controlled climate should provide a better environment for athletes, officials and fans, but playing conditions will be different. They will not be playing on outdoor grass.

"It (indoor bocce) will be a new experience for me," said Van Parys, who will be coached at nationals by a Brantford coach. "The ball rolls different (indoor). Indoor, in theory, it should be perfectly flat. They said it will be an artificial mat over concrete."

It won't change how he prepares for the Special Olympics Canada Summer Games.

"No, I don't think I will change anything. Just go with it. You never think about the opponent, just go out and play.

"I am very excited," he added, looking forward to his first trip to Alberta. "I have never met people from out-of-province, so I want to meet people from different areas."

To help prepare, he attended a Team

Ontario training camp in Bracebridge in November.

Ypma will be competing at his second nationals.

"I went for bocce in 2018," said Ypma, one of three Special Olympics Ontario – Tillsonburg athletes who competed in Nova Scotia, placing 5th out of 60 athletes, losing a three-way tie for third based on point differential. Tillsonburg's Corey Mulholland had won the Gold Division bronze medal that year based on points.

Ypma remembers being around 10-years-old when he started using a putter, and he has maybe 20-25 years playing rounds of golf.

This year, he is competing as a Level 5 golfer.

His golf game has been improving 'a little bit,' he said, with regular games and practice through the summer, mostly at Tillsonview Fairways in Tillsonburg. He plans even more training this spring/summer.

His main goal is to be consistent on the greens, he said.

Ypma admitted feeling a little nervous when he learned he would be competing at the Special Olympics Canada Summer Games... but those nerves always settle once the competition starts.

"The first couple of throws, kind of (nervous) in practice," said Van Parys, going into his fourth year of bocce. "Then you kind of get into your rhythm and everything kind of zones out."

Ypma, who also attended a Team Ontario training camp in Bracebridge (not the same as Van Parys), met other Level 5 golfers in his cabin. And powerlifters. There were nearly 450 athletes at the two training camps from different sports.

"William and Jamie are the only two Special Olympics athletes going to the (2026) nationals – so they are representing Tillsonburg," said Tillsonburg coach Carolyn Mulholland. "We're hoping to get them out in the community a little bit more wearing these (Team Ontario) shirts."



(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

Jamie Van Parys and William Ypma, wearing Team Ontario shirts (Van Parys showing the reverse side), will be competing at the 2026 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in Medicine Hat, Alberta in August. Van Parys has qualified in bocce, and Ypma in golf.



ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION VARNAVIR BRANCH 153 POPPY TRUST ACCOUNT FINANCIAL STATEMENT

BALANCE FORWARD AS OF December 31, 2024	\$89316.69
INCOME	
Poppy Campaign, Memorial & other Donations	37681.65
EXPENSES	
Poppies & Wreaths	\$3122.74
Promotional Material	2412.14
Postage	234.93
Stationary	101.65
Advertising	470.08
Bank Charges	405.31
Volunteer lunch	140.50
Grants to Veterans/Dependents	7453.90
Bursaries	3750.00
Parkwood Institute (Veterans care/comfort fund)	19007.00
Varnavir 153 Cadet Squadron	4385.00
Annual Veterans Banquet	1986.00
Personal Lifting Devices	980.05
Ted Foster Memorial Fund	200.00
Storage Costs	350.00
Youth Education Program	1142.18
Front Entrance Upgrade	2217.00
Total Expenses	\$48358.48
Balance as of December 31, 2025	\$78639.86

The Poppy Campaign is the foundation of the Legion Remembrance Program. Due to the generosity and support of the members of our community, we are able to ensure that Veterans and their families are cared for and treated with the respect they deserve. The Poppy Fund is monies in trust for Veteran assistance only. We also foster the tradition of Remembrance amongst our youth, the leaders of tomorrow. Thank you to the volunteers and the community for the support that makes our Poppy Campaign a success.

Weekend Quiz

by Jake Grant

1. Alex Honnold solo climbed Taipei 101 on Jan. 23, 2026. What country is that in?
2. What does WEF stand for?
3. What does China's Terracotta Army protect?
4. What animal species did Jane Goodall study?
5. How many years ago did the Ice Age end?
6. Williams and Bosc are varieties of which fruit?
7. Which basketball team became the first to reach the milestone of 3,000 wins in 2010?
8. In beer, what does IPA stand for?
9. The gopher is a member of what order of mammals?
10. What vehicle is used to smooth an ice rink?

This week's answers are found on pg. 23

Pittao knocks down 'six-seven' treys in 73-62 senior boys hoops victory

JEFF TRIBE

Post Correspondent

Not only can the Tillsonburg Gemini senior boys' basketball backcourt knock down outside shots, they can also collectively jump on an opportunity to work a little urban slang into the conversation.

The question had been, how many three-point field goals had Kaden Pittao scored through a 73-62 Thames Valley Regional Athletics Southeast victory over the Lord Dorchester Beavers?

"Six... seven?" he responded.

"Hey!" teammate Gavin Wernham interjected. "Six-seven!"

And unlike eye-rolling grandchildren, they had the grace to smile tolerantly when the guy holding the notepad added the palms up, alternately raised and lowered hand gestures to accompany the saying.

Pittao, Wernham and the rest of the Gemini had reason for good humour after an entertaining regular-season-closing win Monday, Jan. 13th in Glendale's Community Gym, one carrying playoff implications. The victory moved Tillsonburg's record to 5-3, fourth place in final TVRA Southeast standings. Rather than facing a play-in game, the Gemini earned a homecourt quarter-final against Woodstock Huron Park Tuesday, Feb. 10, tipping off at 3 p.m.

Tillsonburg entered the Dorchester game short-handed, missing Sean Krahn, Jordan McCormick and Nolan Prefontaine, a trio representing a measure of its inside presence. The Gemini compensated from the outside, Pittao knocking down his first of an eventual six treys early on. He had asked what the play was, and failing to receive an answer, simply turned and hit from outside. The 'shoot' gameplan continued, Grade 9 call-up Cameron James draining his first of two long range bombs after being encouraged to do so by Wernham.

"He's a baller," credited Kypton Loft-

house, supporting the decision.

Pittao had three treys in the opening eight minutes, James a fourth as Tillsonburg, opening with a 7-0 run, exited with a 22-14 lead. Dorchester came at the Gemini with full-court pressure, backing up a 'taller and wider' advantage under the basket.

"That was a gritty game," said Lofthouse, who co-led a 'circle the wagons' approach on the defensive end alongside Jacob Mogg, every player working to box out and board. "Had to deny the lane and had to grind," Lofthouse added. "It was a battle."

Pittao, James and Mogg each contributed a second-quarter three-pointer to a 41-29 half-time lead. Wernham opened the second half with a strong drive to the basket and Tillsonburg led 56-43 heading home, going up by 16, 59-43 on a Mogg free throw with 6:28 to play.

The Beavers weren't about to concede, cutting the gap to ten and then eight with 2:30 left on an old-school three-point play following a blocking call on James. Twenty-three seconds later, Dorchester's K. Greenfield pulled the Beavers within five (65-60) on the first of two free throws. He front-rimmed the second, and in a game highlighted by new-era long-range shooting, Gemini Om Vyas' basic fundamental of boxing out the shooter would prove critical. Vyas pulled down the rebound, moved the ball upcourt and saw it work through his hands to Wernham, who restored a measure of comfort and shifted momentum with his team's eleventh and final trey of the game. A Lofthouse lay-in restored a double-digit gap with 52.4 seconds left, and time ran out on a competitive and crucial Gemini victory.

"We didn't want it, we needed it," said Pittao.

"Now we get a home game," Lofthouse added. "Hopefully a home buyout game."

Pittao led the Gemini offensively with 20 points, Mogg added 17, Lofthouse, displaying a strong midrange game, had 16, Wernham 11 and James eight. W. Downing had 22 for the Beavers, M. Faulkner 21 and L. Zdiznik 10.

"A good battle, a good battle," summed up Gemini coach Terry Coulthard. "I just like to see them work hard and try to execute what we work on in practice."

The junior Gemini closed out their regular season with a comfortable win over the Beavers in the opener, recorded on the TVRA Southeast scoreboard as a 48-28 decision.

"We've definitely gotten better since the start of the season," said James following the juniors' third win against five losses.

"I feel like we're more patient on our plays," added James Strathearn, adding 'better passes and fast breaking' as other areas of improvement.

Tillsonburg will host their Huron Park junior counterparts Tuesday, February 10th in a seven versus ten play-in game tipping off following the senior contest. The winner advances to a Thursday, February 12 road trip to St. Thomas Parkside to take on the second-place, 7-1 Stampeders.

"It's going to be a tough fight, we're going to have to play as a team to move on," Strathearn concluded.



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Tillsonburg's Kypton Lofthouse elevates down the lane en route to the Dorchester Beavers basket.



Gemini Jacob Mogg puts up a runner down the lane.

(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

SENIOR BOYS BASKETBALL

TILLSONBURG	72
DORCHESTER	63

JUNIOR BOYS BASKETBALL

TILLSONBURG	48
DORCHESTER	28

SENIOR GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

DORCHESTER	25, 25, 25
TILLSONBURG	13, 10, 24

JUNIOR GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

TILLSONBURG	17, 25, 29, 19, 15
DORCHESTER	25, 20, 26, 25, 12

MUSIC CORNER

The Dear Gods are not your average patio band



BEN ADDRESS
Tillsonburg Post Columnist

Tillsonburg audiences are in for something familiar and completely unexpected when local band The Dear Gods perform in town next Friday. The trio is made up of

Tillsonburg's David Milton on guitar and vocals, Norwich's David Marcoux on bass and St. Williams' Paul Rapai on drums. The three musicians have carved out a unique lane by reimagining rock anthems from the 1990s and beyond by adapting them in an intimate and stripped-down way. Drawing from the raw emotion of grunge, the melodic hooks of pop-punk and the enduring power of classic rock, The Dear Gods showcase songs down to their bones and then rebuild them with intention.

Rather than relying on walls of amplification, the band leans into acoustic guitars and creative arrangements proving that

great songs do not need distortion pedals to hit hard.

"We believe that great songs can stand alone, stripped of their electric armor," exclaims Milton. "Our goal is to connect with our audience on a deeper level. One acoustic chord at a time."

The band's unique approach comes from digging deeper than the obvious influences. Their live set is like crate digging at a record shop with every album imaginable.

"We drew inspiration from deeper, less obvious sources, but had to balance that to avoid overwhelming our audience," Milton explains. "The result is a set that feels

both nostalgic and daring. Recognizable songs delivered in ways that feel entirely new."

That sense of surprise is cemented right into the band's name. What started light-hearted, quickly became a defining mission statement.

"The name started as a joke because we were trying to create a patio band that played bands you cannot play on a chill patio. We start out playing songs like War Pigs acoustically," Milton says with a smile, while explaining the reaction they were aiming for when dropping a Black Sabbath classic into their set. "It was meant to be a jaw-dropping moment leaving everyone wonder-

ing 'Dear God... what just happened?'"

Pulling off heavy layered rock songs with just three musicians requires creativity and a willingness to take risks.

"We chose songs that would not typically work as a trio, which forced us to be creative and take risks," Milton adds. "It has been a lot of fun, especially since I come from a strict original background. This is an opportunity to experiment."

That experimental spirit has made The Dear Gods a compelling live act, especially in intimate venues where audiences can digest every note up close. Music fans can expect new arrangements of iconic

songs that show new emotional weight delivered with impressive musicianship and a genuine love for the source material.

The Dear Gods' upcoming show promises more than just a night of covers, but also a chance to rediscover songs you thought you knew, and maybe leaving you at the end thinking, 'Dear God... what just happened?'

The Dear Gods make their debut at The Copper Mug on Friday, Feb. 6. The concert is free with no cover charge and starts at 8 p.m.. For more information on the band, you can search The Dear Gods on Facebook and join their Facebook Group for upcoming shows.

UPCOMING SHOWS

JAN. 30 - THE PENSKE FILE, ONE WAY STREETS & FULL THROTTLE
Paddy's Underground
\$20 - 8 p.m. - All Ages/Licensed

JAN. 30 - GHOST TOWN CITIZEN
The Copper Mug: 8:30 p.m.

JAN. 31 - BLUR RODEO W/ THE PADDY STONES
The Copper Mug: 8 p.m.

FEB. 1 - TRIVIA NIGHT
The Copper Mug: 5:30pm

FEB. 5 - DAN HAMM
The Copper Mug: 8 p.m.

FEB. 6 - THE DEAR GODS
The Copper Mug: 8 p.m.

FEB. 7 - CRUSH
The Copper Mug: 9 p.m.

FEB. 8 - SUPER BOWL PARTY
The Copper Mug: 4 p.m.

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Winter is a time of beauty, recharge and the annual seed exchange



**IT'S
STILL
JUST
DIRT**

SUE HEALEY

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

It's easy to love winter in January. When the year and the season are new, the cold is refreshing, the landscape new and exciting. Before the frigid bare days of February sink into our bones and the march of mundane March dulls our minds, winter is both beautiful and welcome.

This year's season has been surprisingly snowy. More like the winters of the past, when snow cover was a given from December to March. Even the usual January thaw has not been enough to completely dissolve the snowbanks in the shadowy parts of the garden. The wind is again blowing snow to swell those remaining white dunes and cover the world. After that brief reminder of

spring, I am glad of winter's return.

There are benefits to a cold, snowy winter - in sight and sound to us and to the health of our landscape. January is a wonderful month to explore the bounty of a Canadian winter and enjoy all that it has to offer.

Perhaps because I was not born to a frigid winter, I have always found it magical. My first keen memory of it was the glittering aftermath of an ice storm. The snowbanks crusted with ice, their pebbled surface like stone where they'd been soft the day before, gleaming in the morning sun. My five-year-old self discovering that winter could change everything. It changed liquids to solids, rain to snow, the world from green to white. It stopped school. Surely a thing that could do all that was magical. And while I later learned the logical reasons behind a snowy winter, it no way diminished my wonder and awe of it.

Many winters later, I am still enchanted by a landscape transformed by snow; forests etched in white frosting, the diamond brilliance of water changed to ice, the satisfying crunch of it underfoot. I am still surprised by cold that catches my breath and freezes the hairs in my nose. And while there is less daylight in winter, I am far more aware (and likely to see) sunrise and sunset during these months, coming late and early before the clocks change again. With blazing mornings and pale, delicate evenings, they are a grand way to greet and end the day.

But winter need not be as dramatic as a snow or ice storm to add beauty to the world. Frost on an old garage window has been a lovely greeting to many of my early morning commutes. Every instance of crystal formation is different, surprising, and ephemeral. Only rarely, when time and conditions for frost coincided, have I been able to catch those crystalized panes through my lens. Whether I capture the glory or not (mostly not) witnessing it is always a gift. There are different forms of frost, each one forming under different conditions and each worth the effort to view. Most of that effort involves early rising and decent outerwear. If you're of a mind, catch a snowflake and look at it under magnification - a marvelous creation of mother nature. Wilson Alywn Bentley spent his life doing just that and photographed over 5,000 unique examples of snowflakes. His photographs are exhibited in museums throughout North America, serving as a powerful celebration of nature's beauty.



Ice spear.

(SUE HEALEY PHOTO)



Frosted pane.

(SUE HEALEY PHOTO)

There are other sights in winter that need nothing more than snow and wind. Together these two conditions can change a landscape by the hour. Drifts along the ridges of fields and roads form shifting artwork for travelers moving over them. Winter makes everything and nothing matter. All mistakes or tasks left undone are swamped in pearly froth and become just another drift to add to the undulating mounds of snow. The stems and branches that remain in the garden stand out more clearly against the white backdrop of snowbanks. The trees and bushes gather the snow around them and their skins, suddenly on display, shine bronze or black in the cold sunlight.

Snow is an excellent insulator, protecting roots from freezing and consistent snow cover is ideal. I encourage drifting by leaving non diseased plant material to overwinter in the garden. Cut evergreens boughs spread around vulnerable plants such as roses and crocosmia provide extra insulation and places for snow to gather. A further benefit comes with the spring thaw when melting snow replenishes the water table while providing nitrogen, carbon dioxide, and trace minerals to the soil.

Perhaps best of all, winter is a time of rest, for the garden and gardener alike. I relish the time of inactivity, of nestling in and cozying up. The long winter evenings invite us to take a seat after supper, sit with a book or project, or maybe a cat and a nap. Winter gives us the moments to restore the reserves of strength (both physical and mental) that the year's activities have sapped. In those moments of quiet rest, winter gives us a spectacle to behold.

When the time for nestling in is done, your local Horticultural Society is there to help fill the time.

Regular meetings are back in full swing with an exciting roster for 2026 scheduled. Members are ready to put hands to earth beginning in February with the annual Seed Exchange, happening an hour before the general meeting. Our guest speaker is David Gascoigne with "Urban Birds" as his topic.

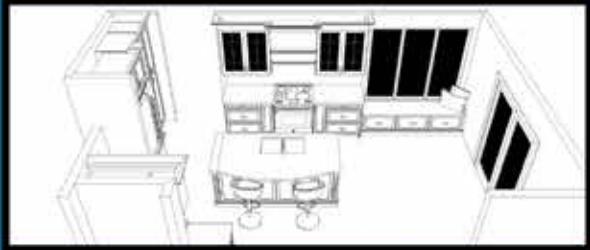
Come as a guest, stay as a member.

The next meeting is Feb. 3., 7:30 p.m. at the Tillsonburg Senior's Centre. Membership is \$25 per year or \$5 per meeting. The seed exchange is from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.



Snowbank.

(SUE HEALEY PHOTO)



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Sip and Create planned for Station Arts on Feb. 7

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

A new event at the Station Arts Centre hopes to inject some fun, creativity, and socialization into the blahs of winter.

Sip and Create, set for Feb. 7 at the Station Arts Centre, gives participants the chance to craft their own wreath and take home a mug created by a Station House Potter.

The event was based on the Sip and Pour held last year, where attendees received a mug and coffee and had a chance to purchase other items made by the Station House Potters.

"It went okay, but we wanted to revamp what we did," said Tabitha Verbuyst, Station Arts Centre executive director and curator.

Attendees will create their own wreaths by adding ferns, cranberries, and dried oranges to a provided grapevine base, following supplied instructions.

"It's open to interpretation because we



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Tabitha Verbuyst, Station Arts Centre executive director and curator, hangs a wreath like the one attendees at the Sip and Create event planned for Feb. 7 would create.

want you to be creative as well," Verbuyst said, adding that assembling the wreaths is straightforward, simple, and doesn't require being artistic.

Attendees will receive a handmade mug from Station House Potters and enjoy coffee or hot chocolate, thanks to donations from Mike and Christina Gazley of Tim Hortons. The event also provides an opportunity to connect socially.

"You can be there and chat and meet new people," Verbuyst said. "It's a fun way to get involved in the arts community. You are leaving with something you made and a mug our potters made."

The event is planned for 2 to 5 p.m. Cost is \$65, and pre-registration is recommended. To register, contact the Station Arts Centre by phone or visit their website. Attendance will be capped at 30 tickets.

"We're hopeful that if this goes over well, we'll have a sip and create a series of quarterly events to get people involved in the arts and meet people in a fun way," Verbuyst said.

Chamber speaker urges businesses to use AI

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

The guest speaker at the Tillsonburg Chamber of Commerce's annual general meeting encouraged business owners to look at AI as they plan for the future.

Walter Melo of the Business Development Bank of Canada spoke at the chamber function on Jan. 21 at the Tillsonburg Legion. Calling itself the "bank for Canadian entrepreneurs", BDC offers higher risk tolerances than traditional banks and more flexibility. It also offers advice to businesses and has a good handle on the business environment.

Melo noted that U.S. trade policy is causing significant uncertainty. In 2025, he said, uncertainty reached its highest level since the Covid peak, leading many businesses to delay planned expansions.

"Uncertainty might be the word of the year," he said.

At the same time, AI is playing a larger role.

"Tech innovation and AI are rewriting the productivity playbook," he said.

AI is being used by businesses to improve efficiency, enhance customer service, and increase sales.

BDC recently completed a survey of 1,500 businesses to determine the top three challenges. The most popular answers were increased input costs, decreased demand for goods and services, and increased competition.

"It's interesting tariffs aren't on the list," Melo said. "They were only important to 19 per cent of those surveyed."

The same survey also asked about business focus, and found that improving profit-



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Walter Melo of the Business Development Bank of Canada encouraged business owners to look at how their business is being run during a presentation at the Tillsonburg and District Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting.

ability was the top priority. Maintaining the current customer base was also important.

Melo said businesses can't control rising costs, labour shortages, supply chain issues, or lower consumer demand. He suggested instead focusing on staffing, what the business sells, how it is sold and the processes. Searching for waste through a review was also mentioned.

"Don't underestimate how much these ac-



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

The chamber AGM saw a new executive stepping forward. Left to right are executive members Lindsay Tribble, president; Megan Causyn, past-president; Cedric Tomico, treasurer; and Rocio Salinas, CEO. Vice-President Scot Bolton was absent from the photo. The chamber directors for the year are Billy Boldt, Greg Bruckler, Christina Gazley, and Rena Pittao.

tions can have on your bottom line," he said.

His key message was, "Every business needs to question how your business is being run."

Melo believes not enough businesses are planning to use AI, which he said is a mistake.

"AI is like giving every employee an intern," he said.

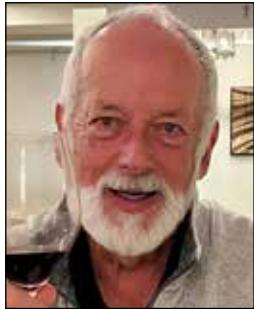
Another challenge for businesses in the

coming years is transition planning, with 142,000 businesses planning to transfer ownership or sell in the next five years. Melo said this represents one in six small and medium-sized businesses in Canada.

"It's also an opportunity to keep Canadian business in Canada," he said, explaining that part of BDC's mandate is to keep foreign equity firms from buying up Canadian businesses.

Tillsonburg Post is available for free in print and online: tillsonburgpost.com

My first and last trip to the Dominican Republic



**OH,
THE
PLACES
WE'LL
GO!**

PAUL KNOWLES

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

There are obviously a number of ways to experience the Dominican Republic. A lot of visitors opt for the “all-inclusive resort” approach, and spend a relaxing (and often well-lubricated) holiday at beach- and pool-side in one of the hundreds of such resorts. Others go for more excitement, choosing on- and under-water adventures, motorized buggy expeditions, zip-lining or waterfall experiences. And still others spend their time on some of the more than two dozen golf courses (a relative rarity in the Caribbean, where some islands have only one or two).

I went with plan C, golf, while staying at an all-inclusive. A buddy of mine who has previously spent cold months in Florida was looking for another option, and we decided to spend eight days at the Meliá Caribe Beach resort in Punta Cana; our package there (and yes, I paid full freight, unusual for a travel writer!) including half-price golf at the nearby, 27-hole, Cocotal Golf course.

My post-trip assessment? Well, to adopt a well-worn cliché, there was the good, the bad, and the ugly. (Let me be clear: we’re not talking about the lovely island of Dominica.)

Let’s start with the good. That would be the golf. The course was in quite good shape (except for the bunkers, some of which had been turned into mud or something close to concrete by recent rains). But the fairways and the often tiny, tricky greens were good.

We played six days straight – which

was a lot, to be honest. The 27 holes allowed us to play a different combination, most days. And the courses were essentially empty; we played 18 on several days without waiting for other golfers, or seeing anyone behind us. That is a golfer’s dream.

The final day of play was a Saturday, and it was busier, so we actually skipped by a couple of lined-up holes, and then added make-up holes on the third nine, so we got in an 18-hole layout of our own devising.

But be warned – golf there ain’t cheap. We paid just under \$150 Canadian per round... and that was on our half-price deal. We talked to other golfers who were paying \$300 Canadian. That’s a pretty hefty price tag for a golf course that is okay, but certainly not a signature golf destination. As well, we were told the courses were not crowded because it was January – November, December, February and March see a lot more visitors, and much busier golf courses.

Now, the bad – or at least, the disappointing. Our resort is rated 4.5 out of 5 stars. Nope.

Start with my room. All of the drawers on the dresser were broken in some way; one would never close properly. I personally fixed the perpetually running toilet, and tightened the toilet seat. My one bar of shower soap was not replaced once in eight days. The air conditioning roared like a 747 on take-off. There were two straight-backed chairs in the room, and instead of a couch, a single daybed... so, nowhere actually comfortable to sit. My safe didn’t work until a staffer came to fix it.

When we checked in, we were given little or no helpful information. For example – no one mentioned that there were tablets located in two places on which you could book reservations at the usually-busy restaurants. There was also one concierge desk which always had a line-up at least half an hour long.

We discovered that you could get certain services – like a golf-cart ride to your room – but only if you asked. No



The Cocotal course was beautiful and generally in good shape.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

one had told us to ask.

The only bar or lounge where you could get a drink after dinner, on this gigantic resort, was the lobby bar, where loud, disco-style music was a mainstay.

None of these are life-changing problems. If the resort was rated 3 stars, it would make sense. But not 4.5.

The ugly? We both got sick. Sick enough that on a couple of days, golfing was a challenge, but we’d paid the big bucks, so we mostly stuck that out, but some meals were skipped, evenings were spent in our rooms, and the trip home was on two wings and a prayer we would get back to Canada without any health crises.

I know not everyone would agree. I have talked to a number of friends since returning, and they have been surprised by my stories. They love the Dominican Republic, and would return there in a

moment. We also met a lot of Canadians there who had made the trip to the DR many times, and are big fans.

By the way, my observation was that there were a lot of Canadians, some Europeans including British folk, a lot of Spanish speaking guests, and almost no Americans. The one person from the US we talked to was wearing a button which read, “I didn’t vote for him.” I commended her for her courage.

I don’t think travel to the Dominican Republic is going to decrease because of this particular article. But if you do choose to go, feel free to ask for my room – I won’t be using it.

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and Past-President of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

The course was well-populated with beautiful, tropical birds, like this egret.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Flowers abounded on the course, include lots of bougainvillea. In fact, one of the three nines was named for that plant. (The others were hibiscus and benjamina).

RIDDLES

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Which fish costs the most?

A goldfish.

What goes up, but never comes down?

Age.

A cowboy rode into town on Friday. He stayed for three nights and rode out on Friday. How is this possible?

His horse's name is Friday.

What has a neck but no head?

A bottle.

What is full of holes but still holds water?

A sponge.

How do you spell COW in thirteen letters?

SEE O DOUBLE YOU.

Why is Europe like a frying pan?

Because it has Greece at the bottom.

SUDOKU

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8				3				6
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Level: Beginner

Solutions on Page 23

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WORD SEARCH GROUNDHOG DAY

G	Y	S	W	E	A	T	H	E	R	F	S	O	J	P	H	Q	V	L	N
Q	U	D	P	U	N	X	S	U	T	A	W	N	E	Y	P	H	I	L	H
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- ANNUAL EVENT
- FEBRUARY
- SHADOW
- PREDICTION
- WIARTON WILLIE
- PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL
- MARMOT
- BURROW
- WEATHER
- TRADITION
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FEBRUARY 17 | 5 - 6:30 PM
 St. Paul's United Church, 88 Bidwell St., Tillsonburg
INVITES YOU - YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS TO OUR ANNUAL PANCAKE SUPPER ON SHROVE TUESDAY
 Adults - \$12, Children under 10 - free. Cash payable at the door. LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE.

JANUARY

JANUARY 30 | 5 - 6 PM
MEATLOAF DINNER AT THE TILLSONBURG LEGION
 Includes mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetables, homemade desserts, tea, and coffee for only \$18 tax included cash at the door. All Welcome!

FEBRUARY

STARTS FEBRUARY 2 | 9 - 11:30 AM
OTTER VALLEY TAI CHI
 St. John's Anglican Church, 46 Ridout St. W., Tillsonburg
 New Monday morning classes begin Feb. 2: 9:00 - 10:30 am Introduction, 10:30 - 11:30 am Foundations.
 Enjoy gentle exercise with others as you work to improve flexibility, balance and stamina. Call 519-688-9779, email ottervalley@canadiantaichiacademy.org, visit canadiantaichiacademy.org

FEBRUARY 6 | 1 - 4 PM
KEN LIGHTHEART AND THE NORTSHORE RAMBLERS DANCE AT THE TILLSONBURG LEGION
 \$7 cash at the door. Cash Bar open. All Welcome!

FEBRUARY 7 | 10 AM - 12 PM
"A TICKET A BASKET" MESSY CHURCH
 St. Pauls United Church, 88 Bidwell St. Tillsonburg
 Join us for crafts, music, snacks, crafts and a hot meal! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

FEBRUARY 8 | 9 AM - 1 PM
SWEETHEART VALENTINE'S BRUNCH AT THE TILLSONBURG LEGION
 All welcome to enjoy pancakes, sausage, bacon, eggs, toast, home fries, fruit cups, tea, coffee, and juice for only \$15 per adult and \$8 per child 10 years and under. Cash at the door. All Welcome!

FEBRUARY 9 | 7:30 PM
DELHI & DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY: PICK

YOUR OWN FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES WHEN IN SEASON
 Delhi Senior Friendship Centre, 418 Queen St., Delhi, ON
 Guest Speaker - Andrew Slood from Andrew's Greenhouse, Waterford, ON. Should prove very interesting. All welcome to join us.
 Enter at rear parking lot off William St.

FLAG RAISINGS FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026
 Join us this February to celebrate Black History Month in Oxford County. Commemorate the history of our Black communities and learn how diverse the community has grown. Pan-African Flag raisings and receptions including local historical displays by the Oxford County Archives and various museums and spoken word presentation by Duane Kumala-Thomas will be held in the following communities throughout the month:

FEBRUARY 17 | 10 AM
NORWICH
 Norwich Community Centre - 53 Stover Street South
 Reception to follow inside the Community Centre's Auditorium.

FEBRUARY 24 | 10 AM
TILLSONBURG
 South Broadway Parkette at Oxford St.
 Reception to follow at Tillsonburg Public Library (2 Library Lane).

Everyone is welcome. For more information visit [@oxfordroots](https://www.instagram.com/oxfordroots) or <http://reveleddotme.wixstudio.com/oxfordroots>

FEBRUARY 21 | 2 PM
A VELOCIPEDE - A WHAT??
 The Edison, Vienna & Area Museum, 6209 Plank Rd. Vienna
 Join Mr. David Harding as he takes us on a journey from Eden to Port Burwell on an unusual, antiquated piece of railroad equipment. Railroads covered great distances & in the time before motorized vehicles, walking the line for maintenance was a long walk! For further information email: bayhamhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com

MARCH

MARCH 21 | 9:30 AM - 4 PM
OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY OXPEX & OTEX 2026 STAMP SHOW
 St. Mary's Catholic High School, 431 Juliana Drive, Woodstock, ON
 Free admission and parking. Framed and Judged exhibits, Stamp dealers, youth gift bags, Sales Circuit, draw prizes. Contact: dhfe@silomail.com. Web: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>

ONGOING CLASSES, CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS

MONDAYS | 7 - 9 PM
MODERN SQUARE DANCING IS FOR YOU!
 Thames Valley Dance Club
 Looking for something to do in the evening or something new to try? Modern square dancing is a great way to learn something new, have fun, meet new friends, relieve stress, and get some exercise! All you need is comfortable shoes and casual clothing. No experience or partner is required and anyone over the age of 12 is welcome (children from 12-15 with an adult, please). The 2025-2026 season has started at the Ingersoll Pipe Band Hall, 108 Wonham St. S. Ingersoll. The first night is free, and after that the cost is \$7.50 per person each Monday, paid monthly at the start of the month. For more information, contact Julie at 519-535-3314.

2ND TUES. OF MONTH (SEPT. TO MAY) | 2 - 4 PM
4TH TUES. OF MONTH (SEPT. TO MAY) | 7 - 9 PM
OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY
 Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock Ontario N4S 1C7
 If you have never belonged to a stamp club, now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your knowledge and collection. Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com. Website: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>

TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS | 7 - 9 PM
SATURDAYS | 10 AM - 12 PM
LEARN BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU (BJJ)
 North Broadway Baptist Church
 Thanks to donor support, we've been able to purchase mats and uniforms, and our instructors generously volunteer their time. This isn't a business—any donations go straight back into the program to help buy more uniforms, mats, and equipment. If it's within your means, a \$20 monthly donation helps support the program, but if not, classes are completely free. **Classes are open to anyone 14 and older.** If you'd like to try a class, please arrive about 15 minutes early to sign waivers and get fitted for a uniform. Information can be found at: <https://www.northbroadwaychurch.ca/nbmfa>, <https://www.facebook.com/northbroadwaymfa>, <https://www.instagram.com/northbroadwaymfa/> Inquires can be made at: nbmfa@northbroadwaychurch.ca

FRIDAYS | 1 PM
INTERESTED IN BRIDGE? JOIN US AT THE TILLSONBURG DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB
 Tillsonburg Senior Centre - 45 Hardy Ave, Tillsonburg
 Don't have a partner? Come anyway and we will match you up with someone. For more information, visit their Facebook page: [TburgBridge](https://www.facebook.com/TburgBridge).

1ST AND 3RD TUES. OF MONTH
TILLSONBURG LIONS
 The Tillsonburg Lions meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays. You are invited to their dinner meetings in the Lion's Den at the Community Centre. If you are interested in giving back to your Community contact Jim at 519 409 0876 for more information.....all are welcome.

1ST WED. OF MONTH | 7 PM
WAGNER MEMORIAL TEETERVILLE LEGION BRANCH 526 - MEMBERS GENERAL MEETING
 The Wagner Memorial Teeterville Legion Branch 526 - 3890 Teeterville Road, Teeterville, ON
 Not a member? Contact us to join. For More Information Call, the Legion 519-443-5588. www.teetervillelegionbranch526.ca

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO HELP AT ONE OF OUR EVENTS? WE WELCOME YOU!
 The Wagner Memorial, Teeterville Legion Branch 526 - 3890 Teeterville Road, Teeterville, ON
 You do not need to be a member to Volunteer, Just contact the legion and leave your name and number and purpose of your call. Someone will get back to you as to where you might be needed. Students and Adults welcome. **Open hours. Wed.-Fri. 3 pm-10 pm, Sat.1 pm-10 pm, Sun.1 pm-6 pm.** For More Information call, the Legion at 519-443-5588 or teetervillelegionbranch526.ca

VON OXFORD GRIEF CARE: FREE MONTHLY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP
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TILLSONBURG
WHEN: 2nd Tuesday of every month
WHERE: VON Oxford Office 24 Brock St. W., Tillsonburg
TIME: 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

INGERSOLL
WHEN: 4th Tuesday of every month
WHERE: Ingersoll Public Library 130 Oxford St., Ingersoll
TIME: 10:30 a.m. -12 Noon

WOODSTOCK
WHEN: 3rd Saturday of every month
WHERE: Sakura House Hospice 715180 Oxford Rd.4, Woodstock
TIME: 10:30 a.m. -12 Noon

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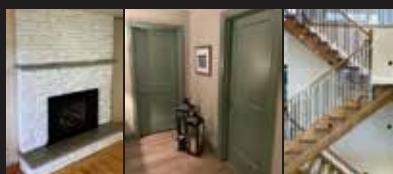
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CLASSIFIEDS

OBITUARY

SEAN RICHARD LEE MUDGE

SEPTEMBER 14, 1976 - JANUARY 25, 2026



It is with incredibly heavy hearts that we, the family, share the sudden passing due to natural causes, of our much-loved son, father, nephew, uncle and friend to many, Sean Richard Lee Mudge, on Sunday, January 25th, 2026, in Port Huron, Michigan, at the age of 49. Much loved father of Hayden, Bodee and Zoe. Much loved son of Richard 'Ric' and Bonnie (Fairs) Mudge,

of Port Burwell. Also survived by several aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins. Sean is predeceased by his sister Shanna. He will also be fondly remembered by many friends he has gained over the years.

Sean had such a love for hockey throughout his life; he was a dedicated coach with both Tillsonburg Minor Hockey (TMHA) and South-Oxford Minor Hockey for over a decade. He volunteered for countless hours to support hockey in the community, and he took on the roles of parent coach, non-parent coach and TMHI board member. These organizations were an integral part of his life, and he went above and beyond to help the kids he coached. He helped his players and even acted as a life coach, when needed. This season, Sean served as the assistant coach of our local U13 'A' South Oxford Storm team. He was proud to be coaching alongside Greg Mitchell, Doug Bailey, Riley Balazs and Shawn Lisabeth. He will be deeply missed. We have lost a dedicated volunteer, friend and mentor. Sean's legacy will live on through the lives he touch.

Friends, neighbours and relatives are invited to attend public visitation on Thursday, January 29th, 2026, between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. in the Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes Chapel, 262 Broadway, Tillsonburg. A Complete Funeral Service to honour Sean's Life will be held on Friday, January 30th, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. in the funeral home chapel, by Pastor Dave Heinrichs, of First Baptist Church. Cremation follows. All funeral attendees are invited to join the family for a reception immediately following the funeral service at Tillsonburg Soccer Club (275 Quarter Town Line, Tillsonburg). Everyone who knew Sean is invited to share personal condolence, photos and favourite memories or contribute memorial donations, in lieu of flowers, to the "Tillsonburg Minor Hockey Association" or to the "Salvation Army" (Tillsonburg) or to the "Helping Hand Food Bank" via Sean's online tribute page at www.verhoevefuneralhomes.com online or by contacting the Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes-Burial and Cremation Services Inc., Tillsonburg (519)842-4238.

OBITUARY

GORDON "MAC" STEWART

1949 - 2026



The family wishes to announce the passing of their beloved brother and uncle, Gordon "Mac" Stewart of Tillsonburg, on Sunday, January 25, 2026 at the age of 76 years. Loving brother to Geoff Stewart and Mary Patterson. Brother-in-law to Lynn Thurston. Cherished uncle to many nieces and nephews. Mac was predeceased by his parents Robert and Margaret Stewart (nee MacGregor), brother Brian Stewart and sister Anne Stewart.

There will be a public graveside service at Eden Cemetery in the Spring. The date and time will be announced at a later date. Memorial donations to the Alzheimer's Society or Heart and Stroke Foundation may be made directly online with the charity or by contacting Ostrander's Funeral Home (519-842-5221) who have been entrusted by the family.

Condolences and memories may be shared at www.ostrandersonline.com

TREES

Hundreds of shade trees, fruit trees, apples, pears, peaches, plums, sweet and sour cherries, apricots, nectarines, blueberries, haskapp grapes, raspberries, elderberries etc. Lots of spruce, pine, cedars for windbreak and privacy hedges. Sizes 1-8 ft. in containers ready to go. Flowering shrubs and much more. Mon-Sat 7:00am to 6:00pm. Martin's Nursery, 42661 Orangehill Rd Wroxeter, ON N0G 2X0 (1 Conc. North of Wroxeter on Belmore Line)

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Taiwan
2. World Economic Forum
3. The tomb of Emperor Qin
4. Chimpanzees
5. 11,700 years ago
6. Pears
7. The Los Angeles Lakers
8. India Pale Ale
9. Rodents
10. Zamboni

SUDOKU

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